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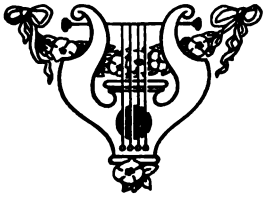
The Flame in the Wind



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MARGARET STEELE ANDERSON

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To the Memory of My Brother
WILLIAM HAMILTON ANDERSON
this little volume is dedicated

THE BREAKING.

(The Lord God speaks to a youth.)

Bend now thy body to the common weight!
(But oh, that vine-clad head, those limbs of morn!
Those proud young shoulders I myself made straight!
How shall ye wear the yoke that must be worn?)

Look thou, my son, what wisdom comes to thee!
(But oh, that singing mouth, those radiant eyes!
Those dancing feet—that I myself made free!
How shall I sadden them to make them wise?)

Nay then, thou shalt! Resist not, have a care!
(Yea, I must work my plans who sovereign sit!
Yet do not tremble so! I cannot bear—
Though I am God!—to see thee so submit!)

PAIN.

You eat the heart of life like some great beast,
  You blacken the sweet sky—that God made blue!
You are the death's-head set amid the feast,
  The desert breath, that drinks up every dew!

And no man lives that doth not fear you, Pain!
  And no man lives that learns to love your rod;
The white lip smiles—but ever and again
  God's image cries your horror unto God!

And yet—O, Terrible!—men grant you this:
  You work a mystery; when you are done,
Lo! common living changes into bliss,
  Lo! the mere light is as the noonday sun!

THE MYSTERY.

This is your cup—the cup assigned to you
  From the beginning. Yea, my child, I know
How much of that dark drink is your own brew
  Of fault and passion. Ages long ago,
In the deep years of yesterday, I knew.

This is your road—a painful road and drear.
  I made the stones—that never give you rest;
I set your friend in pleasant ways and clear,
  And he shall come, like you, unto my breast;
But you—my weary child!—must travel here.

This is your work. It has no fame, no grace,
  But is not meant for any other hand,
And in my universe hath measured place.
  Take it; I do not bid you understand;
I bid you close your eyes—to see my face!

HABIT.

So, then! Wilt use me as a garment? Well,
'Tis man's high impudence to think he may;
But I, who am as old as heav'n and hell,
I am not lightly to be cast away.

Wilt run a race? Then I will run with thee,
And stay thy steps or speed thee to the goal;
Wilt dare a fight? Then, of a certainty,
I'll aid thy foeman, or sustain thy soul.

Lo, at thy marriage-feast, upon one hand,
Face of thy bride, and on the other, mine!
Lo, at thy couch of sickness close I stand,
And taint the cup, or make it more benign.

Yea, hark! the very son thou hast begot
One day doth give thee certain sign and cry;
Hold thou thy peace—frighted or frighted not;
That look—that sign—that presence—it is I!

NOT THIS WORLD.

Shall I not give this world my heart, and well?
If for naught else, for many a miracle
Of the impassioned spring, the rose, the snow?
Nay, by the spring that still must come and go
When thou art dust, by roses that shall blow
Across thy grave, and snows it shall not miss,
Not this world, oh, not this!

Shall I not give this world my heart, who find
Within this world the glories of the mind—
That wondrous mind that mounts from earth to God?
Nay, by the little footways it hath trod,
And smiles to see, when thou art under sod,
And by its very gaze across the abyss,
Not this world, oh, not this!

Shall I not give this world my heart, who hold
One figure here above myself, my gold,
My life and hope, my joy and my intent?
Nay, by that form whose strength so soon is spent,
That fragile garment that shall soon be rent,
By lips and eyes the heavy earth shall kiss,
Not this world, oh, not this!

Then this poor world shall not my heart disdain?
Where beauty mocks and springtime comes in vain,
And love grows mute, and wisdom is forgot?
Thou child and thankless! On this little spot
Thy heart hath fed, and shall despise it not;
Yea, shall forget, through many a world of bliss,
Not this world, oh, not this!

IN THE IMAGE OF GOD.

The falling of a leaf upon thy way,
The flutter of a bird along thy sky,
Thou God, to whom the ages are a day,
Ev'n such, alas!—oh, ev'n such am I!

So long the time, O Lord, when I was not,
And ah, so long the time I shall not be,
So strange and small, so passing small my lot,
I cry aloud at thine immensity!

Will not thy garment brush the leaf aside?
Wilt thou, eternal, look upon the fall
Of one poor bird? Or canst thou, stooping wide
From thy great orbit, hearken to my call?

O, little child—O, little child and fool!—
My planets are my gardens, where I go,
At morn and eve, at dawning and at cool,
To see my living green and mark it grow.

I know the leaves that fall from every tree,
I know the birds that nest those gardens through,
I hear the wounded sparrow cry to me,
I note that dying flutter on the blue.

Hast thou a spot on earth to name it thine?
Does any creature lift to thee a cry?
Behold! Thyself my token and my sign;
For ev'n as thou art—so, my son, am I!

THE DEAD CHILD.

("I believe . . . in the resurrection of the body.")

How young you are, for such lone majesty
  Of silence and repose!
That lip was vowed to laughter and that eye,
  That white cheek to the rose!

What age your spirit hath, who thinks to say?
  If young, or young no more;
But all for merriment, oh, all for play,
  That new, sweet shape it wore!

So, in His time, to whom all time is now,
  From flower and wind and steep,
Shall He not summon you to keep your vow,
  Since He hath made you sleep?

THE PRAYER OF THE WEAK.

Lord of all strength—behold, I am but frail!
Lord of all harvest—few the grapes and pale
Allotted for my wine-press! Thou, O Lord,
Who holdest in thy gift the tempered sword,
Hast armed me with a sapling! Lest I die,
Then hear my prayer, make answer to my cry:

Grant me, I pray, to tread my grapes as one
Who hath full vineyards, teeming in the sun;
Let me dream valiantly; and undismayed
Let me lift up my sapling like a blade;
Then, Lord, thy cup for mine abundant wine,
Thy foeman, Lord, for that white steel of mine!

THE VICTOR.

"Thou hast not lived! No aim of earth
Thy body serves—nor home nor birth;
No children's eyes look up to thee
To solace thy mortality.

"Thou hast not lived! Forbidden seas
Shut thee from Beauty's treasuries;
Not for those hungry eyes of thine
Her marbles gleam, her colors shine.

"Thou hast not lived! Hast never brought
To steadfast form thy hidden thought;
Striving to speak, thou still art mute,
And fain to bear, hast yet no fruit."

So spake the Tempter, at his plot,
But thee, my Soul, he counted not!
Who mad'st me stand, serene and free,
And give him answer dauntlessly:

"Yea, shapes of earth are sweet and near,
And home and child are very dear;
Yet do I live—to be denied
These things, and still be satisfied.

"Yea, Beauty's treasures all are barred
By one dark hand—so spare, so hard!
Yet do I live—who still can be
Their lover, though I may not see.

"Yea, it is true that I have wrought
No form divine from secret thought;
Yet do I live—since fain am I
To work that marvel ere I die.

"And if I fruitless seem to thee,
Yet hath my God some fruit of me;
Since I can hear thee out—and bear
A spirit still for dreams and prayer!"

THE DREAM.

They sing the race—the song is wildly sweet;
  But thou, my harp, oh thou shalt sing the goal!
The distant goal, that draws the bleeding feet
  And lights the brow and lifts the fainting soul!
(And yet, I know not!—Is the goal the place
I dream it is the while I run the race?)

They sing the fight—the list'ners come in bands;
  But tune thy chords, my harp, to sing the prize,
That noble prize for which the fighter stands,
  And bids his body strain and agonize!
(Yet, if I knew! O, is the prize so bright
As I have thought it, all this bitter fight?)

They sing the work; the song makes labor fair;
  But thou, my harp, shalt sing the labor's aim,
The gleaming light, the beauty thronéd there
  That calls the worker onward more than fame!
(But oh, I pray the aim be what I sought
And visioned ceaselessly the while I wrought!)

Yet—hear me not, O Watcher of the race!
  Forgive me, O thou Giver of the prize!
It is enough—the hope before my face,
  It is enough—the dream before mine eyes!
And this I dare: to think thou hast not wrought
Or dream or ardent dreamer all for nought!

THE MYSTIC.

When, wild and spent, I fly before
  Some steadfast Fate, serene, malign,
Let me not think—Lord, I implore—
  Those dark and awful eyes are thine!

Oh, when the dogs of life are loose,
  And, raging, follow on my track,
Let me not dream, by chance or use,
  The leash was thine that held the pack!

Nay—hunted, breathless, faint and prone,
  With my last gaze, ah, let me see
The shape I know, nor shall disown,
  Thy shape, oh God, that runs with me!

GOD, THE COMPLEMENT.

("Nor does being weary imply that there is any place to rest.")

Yea, by your wants bestead,
  You come Myself to know;
For if I be not bread,
  Why hunger so?

And if not water I,
  Your fountain last and first,
Why should your earth be dry?
  Why should you thirst?

Have you not read desire?
  Do you not know your quest?
Spirit, why should you tire
  Were I not rest?

WORK.

Mine is the shape forever set between
The thought and form, the vision and the deed;
The hidden light, the glory all unseen,
I bring to mortal senses, mortal need.

Who loves me not, my sorrowing slave is he,
Bent with the burden, knowing oft the rod;
But he who loves me shall my master be,
And use me with the joyance of a god.

Man's lord or servant, still I am his friend;
Desire for me is simple as his breath;
Yea, waiting, old and patient, for the end,
He prays that he may find me after death!

MICHAEL ANGELO'S "DAWN."

Dawn—midnight—noonday? What are times to thee?
  Man's Grief art thou, that moanest with the light,
  And starest dumb at evening—and at night
Dost wake and dream and slumber fitfully!
Thou art Distress—that cannot cry aloud,
  That cannot weep, that cannot stoop to tear
  One fold of all her garment, but with air
Supremely brooding waits the final shroud!

Dust, long ago, the princes of this place;
  Forgot the civic losses which in thee
Great Angelo lamented; but thy face
  Proclaims the master's immortality!
So sit thee, marble Grief! this very day
How burns the art when long the hand is clay!

THE DEMETER OF PRAXITELES.

Demeter? 'Tis a name! For in thy face
A myriad women find their mourning-place!
Thou, sitting lonely on the wayside stone,
O pagan mother, thou art not alone!

Though Hellas now—thy grief so calmly worn!—
Yet art thou Egypt, reft of thy first-born;
And now lamenting Rama, that fair head
With ashes strewn, and all uncomforted!

And Mary thou—and many women more!
This very day I see thee at my door;
Thine was the voice, an hour ago, that cried
From the next house—wherein a child has died!

LINES WRITTEN TO A TRANSLATOR OF GREEK POETRY.

A wild spring upland all this charméd page,
Where, in the early dawn, the mænads rage,
Mad, chaste, and lovely! This, a darker spot,
Where lone Antigone bewails her lot,
Death for her spouse, her bridal-bed the tomb.
And this, again, is some rich palace-room,
Where Phædra pines: "O woodlands! O, the sea!"
Or some sweet walk of Sappho, beauteously
Built o'er with rose, with bloom of purple grapes!
They are all here—the ancient Attic shapes
Of passion, beauty, terror, love, and shame;
Proud shadows, you do summon them by name:
Achæan princes—Helen—the young god,
Fair Dionysus—Œdipus, who trod
Such ways of doom! Aye, these and more than these
You call across the ages and the seas!
And each one, answering, doth dream he lists
To the great voices of old tragedists!

A GREEK LYRIST SINGS OF APOLLO.

Ah, it was he I heard at early dawn,
From the high hilltop and the dew-wet hollow,
While I was yet as tender as a fawn,
Calling me, "Follow!"

And it was he who spoke at sultry noon,
By the bright pool, when Dian was away:—
"Frail is your harp as is the crescent moon,
Yet shall you play!"

Still do I hear that calling, O Apollo!
Though it is far, and failing is the light:—
"Lo, you are spent, but you shall rise and follow
Into the night!"

ODES OF A BOY.

(At Keats' grave—Winter, 1909.)

Fades the great pyramid, the blank walls fade!
  And thou, immortal boy, dost walk with me
Along that grove from out whose deeper shade
  The nightingale sings living ecstasy.

And where thy burial-stone so long is set
  With plaintive lines that tell a day's despair,
Lo, now that urn with happy figures fret
  Which cannot fail, but go eternal fair!

Yet—suddenly—the wind of death is blown
  On all earth's beauty, even at its prime;
The red rose drops, the hand of Joy is flown,
  And thou—oh, thou art dust this long, long time!

ON A POMPEIIAN BUST CALLED "SAPPHO."

Oh no, not this! This is a Roman face,
Superb, composed, with such a matron grace
As that of great Cornelia—never thee,
Young princess of an ancient poetry!

Nor do I wish thy beauty from its grave;
Rather, one bird across the purple wave,
Or the mere sight of that Ægean sea,
Shall tell thy mortal loveliness to me!

Or I will find some slender, broken plinth,
And mark it thine with wild blue hyacinth,
While some far fruit, upon triumphant bough,
Shall say how unattainable wert thou!

THE PUTTO.

No child, no mortal child am I,
No angel from the blue on high,
And, though I gayly dance and shout,
No Cupid, from a Bacchic rout.

But I am all young innocence,
So young I do not know offence,
So very young I think that I
Will catch that bird, that butterfly.

Madonna—Lady—Queen of Heaven,
Or Mother, whose red wounds are seven,
Or waiting Virgin, mild and fair,
See, I will hide behind thy chair!

And round thy pulpit, friar gray,
Lo, I will frolic all the day!
My ways, perchance, are not divine,
But cannot hurt thee—no, nor thine!

And thou, O little darling Christ,
'Tis long ere thou be sacrificed;
Do beckon me, thou pretty One,
And we will sing and laugh and run!

And at the last, why then will I
The earthly darkness beautify;
Dead Son, upon thy mother's knee,
While Heaven weeps blood, I garland thee!

THE SHEPHERD.

(On a fragment by De Bussy.)

Thy slender form I think I see
On winter hills of Tuscany,
Thy slender pipe I think I hear,
So very faint, so very clear.

That lonely reed! It seems to me
To sing thine own simplicity,
For thou art but a child and young,
How should'st thou know a subtler tongue?

Then, still a child, I pray thee pass!
I would not see thee with a lass,
Nor follow thee o'er grass and rock,
As thou dost lead some larger flock.

Ah no! That little, wilding pipe
I would not give for one more ripe;
E'en glad were I to hear it spent
Unchanged—and thou still innocent!

WHISTLER.

(At the Exhibit in the Metropolitan Museum, March, 1910.)

So sharp the sword, so airy the defence!
As 'twere a play, or delicate pretence!
So fine and strange—so subtly poiséd, too—
The egoist, that looks forever through!

That little spirit, air and grace and fire,
A-flutter at your frame, is your desire;
No, it is you, who never knew the net,
Exquisite, vain—whom we shall not forget!

A STAGE-FIGURE.

(A painting by Whistler.)

A thing of flesh and blood? Not so!
Yet what you are I do not know.
A paper sword? A pasteboard flame?
Ah no, I cannot find the name!

Whate'er you are, 'tis not of earth,
Nor did high Heaven give you birth;
A marionette your mother? Well—
But you were sired by Ariel!

THE CHURCH.

Still, still thy garden hath its fruits and spices,
My Lord, my Lord!
Still hath its wells and pools of thy devices,
My Lord!
White, in a stranger soil, thy lily stands—the close
Breathes with thy rose!

Wild feet, mad feet, thy lovely paths have beaten,
My Lord, my Lord!
And sinful lips thy holy fruits have eaten,
My Lord!
Strange hands have tended me and tended ill, yet thou
Lovest me—now!

So to thy feet I offer my waste places,
My Lord, my Lord!
O walk them till they spring in verdant graces,
My Lord!
With new trees plant—and from the fruits divine
Tread out thy wine!

THE MADONNA OF THE VEIL.

Light through a little veil is all thy trace
  Of halo, blessed Child!
The sorrow of the world is in thy face,
  O fair, O undefiled!
  O dear and undefiled!

The kneeling boy, with pretty lips apart,
  Half loves, half worships thee;
Baby and sweet, yet separate thou art
  To that simplicity,
  To that young piety!

But Mary's look no hint of anguish stirs;
  Perfect that motherhood;
One day the bitter sword—this day is hers;
  And—God!—how very good!
  O gracious God! How good!

LA DOLEUR DE LA JEUNESSE.

Ah, love, why love you tears?
  What beauty in the rue?
Do you not know the years
  Shall bring their griefs to you,
To dew your nightly pillow ere you sleep?
    Perchance—but let me weep!

No sorrow do you mourn,
  No cloud in heaven for you,
No graves have you, forlorn,
  With salt tears to bestrew,
Nor any field of tares that you must reap.
    Ah no! Yet I would weep!

One day, shall not your ships
  Come sailing o'er the blue,
With fruit and spice for lips,
  And robes of many a hue,
And gems and gold for your white hands to keep?
    Yet, on the shore, I weep!

Then I my harp will bring,
  And sing your tears and ruth;
More sweet than songs of spring
  Sweet bitterness of youth!
I will forget, one hour, that grief is deep,
    And, singing, I will weep!

SONG.

THE FALLEN LEAVES.

The bride, she wears a white, white rose—the plucking, it was mine;
The poet wears a laurel wreath—and I the laurel twine;
And oh, the child, your little child, that's clinging close to you,
It laughs to wear my violets—they are so sweet and blue!

And I, I have a wreath to wear—ah, never rue nor thorn!
I sometimes think that bitter wreath could be more sweetly worn!
For mine is made of ghostly bloom, of what I can't forget—
The fallen leaves of other crowns—rose, laurel, violet!

THE SIN.

That haunting air had some far strain of it,
That morning rose hath flung it back to me!
The wind of spring, the ancient, awful sea,
Bid me remember it.

And looking back against the look of Love,
I feel the old shame start again and sting;
Such eyes are Love's they will not ask the thing,
But I remember it!

So this one dream of heaven I dare not dream:
We two in your familiar ways and high,
While you and God forget—and even I
Cannot remember it!

"FROM SUDDEN DEATH. . . ."

Roses about my way, and roses still!
O, I must pick and have my very fill!
Red for my heart and white upon my hair—
And still I shall have roses and to spare!
My child, I save thee thorns! Dear little friend,
This is the end!

So long the road, so lone the road and gray,
My bleeding feet must travel many a day!
With not an inn where I may stop and rest,
With not a roof that claims me for its guest!
Hush! the road vanishes! Yes, yes, poor friend,
This is the end!

O Lord, let thou thy servant go in peace!
Now I have rounded out life's perfect lease,
Spare me the clouded brain, the dark'ning eye,
Nor let me be a burden ere I die!
Thou shalt not be! Nay, even now, old friend,
This is the end!

AUTUMN.

Tainted with death? Ah then, the taint is sweet!
As if God took the essences of life
And burned them in a brazier at his feet,
The smoke of them ascending rich and rife
To please his nostrils! What if man be loath
To your deep bosom, and would have the Spring
His bride forever! He who made you both
Knoweth your beauty for as fair a thing;
Like that of one who long hath been a wife,
And mothered men! As piercing as a knife,
And rich beyond all mortal imaging!

THE LESSER BEAUTY.

You are the first wild violet of the year;
Young grass you are, and apple-bloom, and spray
Of honeysuckle; you are dawn of day,
And the first snow-fall! It is you I hear
When the March robin calls me loud and clear,
Or lonely rill goes singing on its way
Like some small flute of heav'n; or when the gray
Sad wood-dove calls and early stars appear.

And you it is within the wayside shrine
Carved tenderly; and in the folded wings
On some neglected tomb; and in the vine
And leaf and saint of old imaginings
On some forgotten missal—little things
We would not barter for things more divine!

TO THE FIGHTING WEAK.

Stand up, you Strong! Touch glasses! To the Weak!
The Weak who fight: or habit or disease,
Birth, chance, or ignorance—or awful wreak
Of some lost forbear, who has drained the cup
Of passion and wild pleasure! So! To these,
You strong, you proud, you conquerors—stand up!

Touch glasses! You shall never drink a glass
So salt of tears, so bitter through and through,
As they must drink, who cannot hope to pass
Beyond their place of trial and of pain,
Who cannot match their trifling strength with you;
To these, touch glasses—and the glasses drain!

They cannot build, they never break the trail,
No city rises out of their desires;
They do the little task, and dare not fail
For fear of little losses—or they keep
The humble path and sit by humble fires;
They know their places—all these fighting Weak!

Yet what have you to show of tears and blood,
That mates their blood and tears? What shaft have you,
To mark the dreadful spots where you have stood,
That rises to the height of one poor stone
Proclaiming one poor triumph to the blue?
Ah, you have nothing! Then stand up and own!

And yet you shall not pity them! They bear
The stripe of some far courage that to you
Is all unknown—and you shall never wear
Such splendor as they bring to some last cup;
You do not fight the desperate fight they do;
Then—to the Weak! Touch glasses! standing up!

THE DOUBTER.

O friendly, that I never knew for friend,
  O flame, that never warmed me from the cold,
O light, that never beckoned to an end,
  Give me but once thy beauty to behold!

Thou, Faith! Who never held before mine eyes
  Or wreath of bay or life's diviner rose,
Lift up thy face against my sombre skies
  And let me see thee ere mine eyelids close!

Come, lighten mine as thou dost other ways,
  Come, conquer me if only for an hour!
O beckon with that shadowy wreath of bays!
  O lift to me that unimagined flow'r!

CHILDLESS.

Up to the little grave, with blossoms kept,
They went together; and one hid her face,
And spoke aloud the boy's dear name, and wept.
The other woman stood apart a space,
And prayed to God. "If only I," she said,
"Might keep a grave, and mourn my little dead!"

THE MOTHER.

Yes, Lord, I know! The child is thine,
And in thy house he shall grow up,
Nor know the lash of life, nor cup
Of trembling, as if child of mine.

But ah—forgive me!—is he warm?
And fed? Or does he miss my breast?
Oh, I blaspheme! But can he rest,
And never cry, in Mary's arm?

IN THE DAWN.

At night it is not strange that thou art dead;
I give thee to the stars, the moonlight snow;
But ah, when desolate I lift my head,
And thou art gone at early morning—No!

THE SPRING AFTERWARDS.

Ah, give again the pitiless snow and sleet—
November's leaves—or raving winds, that beat
The heart's own doors—or rain's long ache and fret!
Only, not spring and all this delicate sweet!
Or not this vision of a girl, so set
In April grass, in April violet!

SPRING.

I am a virgin—whom no man hath known,
And all desire to know. The figure I
Of mortal dream and mortal prophecy.
Thou desert Sphinx, with thy gray lips of stone,
Keep thy poor secret—I have kept mine own!

IMAGINATION.

With the old gods thou walkest, 'mid the leaf
And bloom of ancient morning and of light;
Thou die'st with Christ, and with the nailéd thief
That dies upon his left hand and his right.

Yea, thou descendest into hell—and then
To the last heaven dost take thy road sublime;
Thine hostelries the secret souls of men,
Thy servants all the fleeting things of time!

THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE.

How splendid and how vain in thee
The ancient quest, O Italy!
Too strange that wreath, too strangely worn,
Apollo's laurel—Christ's red thorn!

AGOSTINO DI DUCCIO.

The chime of silver bells; the sweet
Wild rush of fairy wings and feet;
The fluting birds of dawn; the small
And crystal music of the waterfall,
Or piping of some lone and hidden faun;
All this you were—and suddenly were not;
A moment's Ariel—centuries forgot!

HAWTHORNE.

Child—lover—servant—master of Romance,
To you she showed, not splendid of attire,
With gaud and grace, but all to your desire
In lonelier hues of solemn radiance!
Long years you followed her, and at her glance,
As at some word, divinely sweet or dire,
Beheld the souls of men, in shapes of fire,
Through veiling flesh look out to her askance.

You saw the brand upon unbranded breast;
From evil heart you saw the witches wind;
You saw dark passion breed in frolic youth;
And yet, with sight all delicate and blest,
You knew the primrose of a maiden's mind,
You took of shame the grave white flower of truth!

THE VIOLINIST.

But that one air for all that throng! And yet
How wondrously the magic strain went through
Those thousand hearts! I saw young eyes, that knew
Only the fairest sights, grow dim and wet,
While eyes long fed on visions of regret
Beheld life's rose, upspringing from its rue;
For some, the night-wind in thy music blew,
For some, the spring's celestial clarinet!

And each heart knew its own: the poet heard,
Ravished, the song his lips could never free;
The girl, her lover's swift, impassioned word;
The mother thought, "O little, buried face!"
And one, through veil of doubt and agony,
Saw Christ, alone in the dim garden-place!

THALIA AND MELPOMENE.

The night would sadden us with wind and rain—
Let's to sweet Comedy and scorn the night!
Let's read together: how, by silver light,
The fairies went, a most enchanting train,
Amid those clowns and lovers; how the twain,
Celia and Rosalind, as shepherds dight,
Frolicked through Arden; or of that rare sprite,
That Ariel, who could trick the mortal brain
To strange beliefs. What! wilt have nothing glad?
Wilt read, while winds are moaning out regret,
The fate of Desdemona—Juliet?
Lovest the rain to come and make thee sad?
Ah, well!—I know!—How sweet the tragic part!
I am grown old, but once—was what thou art!

A BOY'S VIRGIL.

Dust on the page, from these forgetful years!
I brush it off, to see the fading date
Written in boyish hand; to find through tears
The lad's dear name, inscribed with all the state
Of the first day's possession; and to read
Along the tell-tale margin, scribbled thick.
Here is the note—'twas writ with guilty speed—
And here the sketch, with guilty pencil quick;
And here's a picture! Was she ever so?
Were these her curls and this her merry look
Who lieth in her old green grave as low
As he is lying? Ah, this faded book!
I think not of the bold and storied wrong
Done for a woman's fairness, nor of strong
And god-like heroes, nor of beauteous youth
In game and battle—but, with heart of ruth,
About this boy, who laughed and played and read
So carelessly! Ah, how long he is dead!

THE SHADOW.

Get you away! Is not the rose at flow'r?
And list that song! The bird is in the sky!
Ah, foolish one, I know your final hour,
I know the very place where you shall lie.

Silence! The music, and the bridal-train!
Do you not see the maidens in their white?
Along that whiteness, lo, I am the stain,
And darken where the Lord of all shall smite!

Yet leave me, Shadow, leave the day dear-bought
When the swift runner reaches to the goal!
That day is mine—and at the end, unsought,
I ask the runner's body from his soul.

Then hast thou all! The beautiful, the brave!
Nothing untouched, dark Visitant, of thee!
Oh blinded Reason! Sweeter for the grave,
And fair a thousand-fold because of me!

ALLUREMENT.

From yonder hedge, from yonder spray,
He calls me onward and away;
Broad lies the world and fair to see,
The cuckoo calls—is calling me!

I have not seen nor heard of Care,
Who used my very bed to share,
Since that first morn when, airily,
The cuckoo, calling, called to me!

My sweetheart's face? I have forgot;
My mother? But she calls me not;
From that green bank, from that dim lea,
The cuckoo calls—is calling me!

And I must go—I may not choose;
No gain there is, nor aught to lose;
And soon—ah, soon!—on some wild tree
The bird sits long and waits for me!

TO THE MEN WHO WENT DOWN ON *THE TITANIC*.

(News Item: "It remains true that two hundred English and American men were sacrificed for as many peasant women.")

Once more I read, writ out in blood and tears,
Across this midnight page of sea and sky,
The legend of our English race that fears,
O never death, but to refuse to die!

Soldier and merchant, men of bench and bar,
Of brush and pen, of gold deep-multiplied,
To those poor women, peasants from afar,
You gave your places, and in giving died!

Yet not for these, oh, not for these alone,
You made the last, the lasting sacrifice!
On those dark seas great Honor called her own,
All women's faces set before their eyes!

Lord of the virtues, spare, O spare us such!
We cannot live without this grace from thee;
Gold, statecraft, beauty—yea, we need them much,
But more—ah, God!—this ancient gallantry!

THE NIGHT-WATCHES.

The laurel withers on your brow,
O victor, weary of the race!
And you, who sit in mighty place,
How heavy is your scepter now!

Flushed with the kiss your lips have known,
Woman, this is your hour to wake,
And know that flesh and heart may break
When love hath entered on its own.

And you, who knew where angels trod,
And marked the path for duller eyes,
In this lone hour are you still wise?
Do you not quail before your God?

O God, to whom the dark is day,
Forget not these, the strong, the right,
The happy souls—for, Lord, at night
They tremble in their tents of clay!

COURAGE.

I thank thee, Life, that though I be
This poor and broken thing to see,
I still can look with pure delight
Upon thy rose—the red, the white.

And though so dark my own demesne,
My neighbor's fields so fair and green,
I thank thee that my soul and I
Can fare along that grass and sky.

Yet am I weak! Ere I be done,
Give me one spot that takes the sun!
Give me, ere I uncaring rest,
One rose—to wear it on my breast!

THE ANGEL AND THE CHILD.

"O, was it on that awful road,
The way of death, you came?"
"It was a little road," he said,
"I never knew its name."

"Is it not rough along that road?"
"I cannot tell," said he,
"Up to your gate, in her two arms,
My mother carried me."

"And will you show me Christ?" he said,
"And must we seek Him far?"
"That is our Lord, with children round,
Where little blue-bells are."

"Why, so my mother sits at night,
When all the lights are dim!
O, would He mind—would it be right—
If I should sit by Him?"

DONATELLO.

Child of the North, within thy Northern eyes
How brood and burn the restless mysteries!
Blooded of Hellas—thy dark brows between,
That spray of antique laurel, how serene!

BEATRICE.

Vision of light, above triumphal car—
Vision of guidance—star of ev'ry star—
And thronéd saint within the great white Rose,
I follow thee: the book at last to close,
And see again, while sun and stars grow less,
A little girl, in little crimson dress!

THE INVALID CHILD.

When I see other women's sons at play,
God, pity me, lest I should turn away
In rage and grief, and should not dare to look
At my child, sitting patient with his book!

But when their sons hold all the world in fee,
With young men's pride—oh, then think not of me!
Load me with burdens, let me feel the rod,
And give my son his manhood, O my God!

CONSCIENCE.

Wisdom am I when thou art but a fool;
My part the man, when thou hast played the clod;
Hast lost thy garden? When the eve is cool,
Harken!—'tis I who walk there with thy God!

THE TREES.

When on the spring's enchanting blue
You trace your slender leaves and few,
Then do I wish myself re-born
To lands of hope, to lands of morn.

And when you wear your rich attire,
Your autumn garments, touched with fire,
I want again that ardent soul
That dared the race and dreamed the goal.

But, oh, when leafless, dark and high,
You rise against this winter sky,
I hear God's word: "Stand still and see
How fair is mine austerity!"

LOST YOUTH.

(For a friend who mourns its passing.)

He took the earth as earth had been his throne;
And beauty as the red rose for his eye;
"Give me the moon," he said, "for mine alone;
Or I will reach and pluck it from the sky!"

And thou, O Life, dost mourn him—for the day
Has darkened since the gallant youngling went;
And smaller seems thy dwelling-place of clay
Since he has left that valley tenement.

But oh, perchance, beyond some utmost gate,
While at the gate thy stranger feet do stand,
He shall approach thee—beautiful, elate,
Crowned with his moon, the red rose in his hand!

TO A FIGHTER, DEAD.

Pass, pass, you fiery spirit! Never bland
And halting never! Hosted round to-night,
At the great wall, with spears of lifted light,
Held by embattled seraphim, who stand
To greet their friend, their comrade, and their own!
Doubtless, O spirit made for burning war,
Doubtless your God has need of you afar,
To lead, for Him, some heav'nly fight and lone,
And therefore knights you—thus, before the throne!

"WHERE THERE IS NO VISION THE PEOPLE PERISH."

Spare us, O Lord, that last, that dreariest ill!
Thy wrath's grim thunder, and thy lightning-scorn
For our iniquity—that we have worn
Soft as a grace—these, if it be thy will,
But not unsouléd darkness! Not the chill
Dead air, in which men move a while forlorn
And swiftly fail! Oh, break us, make us mourn
With tears of blood—but let us see thee still!

For we have visioned thee! Once, long ago,
O'er sea and wilderness a cloud of fire,
Thou led'st us forth; 'mid many a shame and woe,
We still have dreamed apocalypse; at last,
Ah, go not out, thou Flame of all the past!
Burn, thou bright Ardor—burn, thou great Desire!